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Message Text

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13
ORIGIN NEA-04

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /005 R

66611
DRAFTED BY: NEA/INS:RDLORTON:MMK
APPROVED BY: NEA/INS:BWBROWN
---------- 032560
R 072136Z OCT 74
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 220865

FOLLOWING REPEAT NEW DELHI 13306 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS 4 OCTOBER.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 13306

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, IN
SUBJECT: VIOLENCE AND STRIFE IN INDIA

1. 1974 HAS ALREADY PROVEN A VIOLENCE-SCARRED YEAR. DURING JANUARY - APRIL THE BLOODY GUJARAT UPHEAVALS RESULTED IN 90 DATHS AND 209 INJURIES BY OFFICIAL COUNTRY. THE ONGOING BIHAR DISTURBANCES HAVE CLAIMED OVER 40 LIVES SO FAR. ACCORDING TO AN EMBASSY STUDY BASED ON PRESS REPORTS AND OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS, 194 PERSONS WERE KILLED AND 629 INJURED IN ABOUT 400 POLICE FIRINGS IN THE COUNTRY BETWEEN JANUARY 1 AND AUGUST 31, 1974.

2. EARLIER THIS YEAR WE ANTICIPATED (NEW DELHI 8818 AND 12095) THAT FOOD SHORTAGES AND RISING PRICES WOULD CONTINUE TO INFLICT SEVERE HARDSHIPS ON INDIA'S LOWER CLASSES, PARTICULARLY IN URBAN AND VERY REMOTE RURAL AREAS, AND RESULT IN A WIDENING PATTERN OF VIOLENCE AND UNRESTS. DURING THESE LEAN MONTHS BEFORE CONFIDENTIAL

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THE KHARIF CROP IS HARVESTED IN THE LATE FALL, THIS RTREND HAS

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PICKED UP. STUDENT UNREST IN MUCH OF NORTHERN INDIA, PUBLIC RESENTMENT AGAINST CORRUPTION AND ATTEMPTS BY OPPOSITION PARTIES TO MOBILIZE DISCONTENT HAVE PROVIDED THE ENERGY. SEVERE FOOD SHORTAGES ALREADY EXIST IN PARTS OF WEST BENGAL, ORISSA AND GUJARAT. AS WE REPORTED IN OUR 12095, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO KEEP SUFFICIENT FOOD ON THE RAILS TO AVERT REAL, IF LOCALIZED, STARVATION CONDITIONS IN ISOLATED AREAS.

3. OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS VIOLENCE RELATING TO FOOD SHORTAGES HASE BEEN SLOWLY INCREASING, BUT IT IS STILL VERY SCATTERED AND LIMITED. IN WEST BENGAL, ANDHRA PRADESH, RAJASTHAN, GUJARAT AND U.P. THE PRESS HAS REPORTED SEVERAL DOZEN FOOD DEMONSTRATIONS, LOOTING OF PRIVATE AND OFFICIAL GRAIN STORAGE FACILITIES AND TRAINS TRANSPORTING FOODGRAINS. CONGEN CALCUTTA REPORTS THAT THERE HAVE BEEN AT LEAST FOUR CASES OF MOB ATTACKS ON RAILWAY FOOD TRAINS BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 8 AND SEPTEMBER 26. ACCORDING TO CALCUTTA RAILWAY SOURCES, SINCE SEPTEMBER 26 ALL FOOD TRAINS HAVE BEEN GUARDED BY ARMED MEMBERS OF THE RAILWAY PROTECTION FORCE, AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO INCIDENTS SINCE THEN.

4. J.P. NARAYAN'S BIHAR MOVEMENT MAY POSE A SPECIAL PROBLEM TO MRS. GANDHI AND HER GOVERNMENT IN OCTOBER. NARAYAN HAS JUST ENDED A ONE-MONTH LULL BY INITIATING A STATEWIDE GENERAL STRIKE FROM OCTOBER 3-6. ON THE FIRST TWO DAYS, PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE NORTHERN AND NORTHWESTERN PARTS OF THE STATE SPILLED OVER INTO ATTACKS BY MOBS ON GOVERNMENT INSTALLATIONS. SIX PERSONS WERE KILLED AND TWO DOZEN INJURED, INCLUDING 20 POLICEMEN, ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL FIGURES. OVER 2,000 HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. RAILWAY TRACKS AND STATIONS WERE THE MAIN TARGETS IN THESE AREAS, AND TRAFFIC ALONG THE MAIN EAST-WEST REAIL LINES WAS SEVERELY INTERRUPTED. IN GENERAL, RURAL AREAS OF THE STATE WERE UNAFFECTED, BUT INITIAL REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE STRIKE'S OBJECTIVE TO PARALYZE PRIVATE AND OFFICIAL ACTIVITY WAS SUCCESSFUL IN PATNA AND SEVERAL OTHER SMALL TOWNS. IN DELHI, VETERAN POLITICIAN J.P. KRIPALANI, WITH SUPPORT FROM SOME OPPOSITION PARTIES, WILL ATTEMPT TO LAUNCH A BIHAR-TYPE MOVEMENT ON OCTOBER 6 BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOME.

5. COMMENT: IT IS ALMOST CERTAIN THE TYPE OF VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL UNREST DESCRIBED ABOVE WILL CONTINUE ON THE UPSWING
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DURING THE MONTHS AHEAD, GIVEN THE PROSPECTS FOR FOOD SHORTAGES, HGIHER PRICES FOR ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES AND STUDENT UNREST. THE VIRTUAL ABSENCE OF A COMMON, TRANSREGIONAL CATALYTIC AGENT TO LINK DISTURBANCES IN DIFFERENCE PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, THE WELL-TESTED ABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF COMPARTMENTALIZE AND THEN ASSUAGE CRISES, AND GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO ENLARGE, COORDINATE AND EQUIP ITS POLICE AND PARAMILITARY FORCES OVER THE PAST SEVEN MONTHS, HOWEVER, ENSURE THAT BREAKDOWNS IN LAW AND ORDER WILL BE

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CONTAINED. SCHNEIDER UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, FOOD SHORTAGE, CASUALTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 OCT 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: elyme
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE220865
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/INS:RDLORTON:MMK
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740284-1038
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741066/aaaaceio.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16-Aug-2002 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <05 MAR 2003 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VIOLENCE AND STRIFE IN INDIA
TAGS: PINT, PINS, IN
To: KATHMANDU COLOMBO
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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